

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, July 2, 1999

The President's News Conference

June 25, 1999

The President. Earlier today, in a speech at Georgetown University, I discussed the opportunities now before our Nation. Before I take your questions, let me just take a moment to recap what I believe is America's agenda in the coming months.

Our trip to Europe advanced America's ideals and interests. Working with our partners, we won an agreement to ban abusive child labor everywhere in the world, took new steps to strengthen the global economy, agreed to triple the debt relief provided for many of the poorest nations, and to strengthen democracy and reform in Russia.

We also worked to put together, to put in place the building blocks of peace in Kosovo and to put the Balkans on a shared path to a prosperous, united future. I will meet with the region's leaders later this summer to give the process further momentum.

I met with Kosovar refugees in Macedonia who are planning to return home. They thanked America and our Allies for giving them a chance to reclaim their lives on their native lands. I also met with and thanked some of the American air men and women who achieved the success and with some of our and other NATO troops who are going into Kosovo now to make sure we win the peace. They know that they're doing the right thing, and I am very proud of all of them.

While America is enjoying success abroad, it is important that we keep pushing forward on our challenges here at home. This is a time of great hope for our Nation. Just today we learned that the American economy grew at a 4.3 percent in the first 3 months of this year. America plainly is on the right track.

But we will be judged by what we do with this opportunity, whether we seize it or squander it in petty bickering and partisan animosity. There will be plenty of time for

politics in the months to come. This summer should be a season of progress.

We should start by acting quickly on issues where most lawmakers, Democratic and Republican, agree: legislation to let disabled Americans keep their Medicaid health insurance when they go to work; an increase in the minimum wage; campaign finance reform; a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

I was heartened that earlier today the House overwhelmingly passed legislation making sure that foster children are not cast out in the cold when their time in foster care ends. This is a vital issue, one that Hillary has championed for many years. And I am very pleased by the House action.

Then we must turn to broader ways and, in some ways, more difficult challenges facing our Nation. First, we have a duty to maintain the fiscal discipline that has produced our prosperity and use it to strengthen Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century and to pay down our national debt.

On Tuesday I will propose the detailed plan to modernize Medicare—cutting costs, improving service, and helping senior citizens with their greatest growing need, affordable prescription drugs.

Second, we must widen the circle of opportunity by investing in education while demanding accountability and insisting that the Congress keep our commitment of last year to finish hiring 100,000 more teachers to lower class size in the early grades.

Third, in 2 weeks I will be joined by corporate, civic, and political leaders of both parties on a 4-day tour of America's new markets—the places in our country which have not yet felt the surge of our prosperity—to mobilize the private sector to bring jobs and growth to our poorest neighborhoods, and to build support for our new markets initiative to give tax credits and loan guarantees to those who invest in America on the same

terms we give to those who invest in developing economies overseas.

And fourth, in the wake of the tragedy at Littleton, we must continue to meet the challenge of youth violence. Hillary and I are developing a national campaign on youth violence, working with parents, educators, the entertainment industry, and others. But we also must take sensible steps to take guns out of the hands of criminals and away from children. We can't expect young people to stand up to violence if Congress won't stand up to the gun lobby.

I proposed—and with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore, the Senate passed—the measure to close the gun show loophole. The Senate also passed legislation to require child safety locks, to ban large ammunition clips for assault weapons, to ban violent juveniles from owning handguns as adults.

Two weeks ago the Republicans in the House blocked that measure. They would even weaken the current law by letting criminals store their guns at pawnshops. Now, there is still time for Congress to act. Republican leaders could appoint legislators as negotiators to craft a bill that includes the tough Senate provisions. I hope they will do that and send me a strong bill. Plainly, the country wants that.

Again I say, this is sort of like the Patients' Bill of Rights; it's really not a partisan issue anywhere but Washington, DC. I hope they will send me a strong bill. If they send me one that weakens current law, I will send it back to them and keep working until we get the job done right.

Now, this is, admittedly, an ambitious agenda, but it can all be done in the coming months. I will use all the powers available to me as President, working with Congress and with my executive authority. I will summon the citizens of our country to help us to solve these problems.

This is a good time for America, but we will be judged by whether we make the most of it. I look forward to making the effort.

Thank you very much.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Kosovo

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, despite the end of the war, there is

still a new wave of violence and terror in Kosovo; only this time it's Serb homes that are being burned, Serb stores that are being looted, and Serb civilians who are being killed. Are you alarmed by what's going on there? And why is NATO letting this happen? Can't NATO do more to stop it?

The President. Well, first of all, NATO is not letting it happen. We're doing what we can to stop it. And I am concerned about it. I'm not particularly surprised after what they've been through. But we signed an agreement with the KLA in which they agreed to demilitarize. The leader even asked the Serbs to come home. And we are deploying our people as quickly as we can. Obviously, if we can get all of our people in completely and then get them properly dispersed around the country, we'll be able to provide a far higher level of protection. And I think it's very important. And for those people who lose their homes, they're entitled to have them rebuilt, along with everybody else, and I intend to do that.

President's Initiative on Race

Q. Mr. President, you covered the waterfront on domestic issues you think are very important. But there is a question of racism. And I understand there's a report in the White House, already in second draft, and it's supposed to be a political hot potato and, therefore, you're hesitant to make it public.

The President. Oh, no, that's not what's going on. There is a draft of a book that I wanted to produce and asked for help on from Chris Edley and from others on our staff and not on our staff several months ago. And Chris gave me his draft; then the staff looked at it and talked about where it was and wasn't consistent with present policies we were pursuing. They gave it all to me.

I was involved for the last 3 months with the conflict in Kosovo. And what has really happened is that I want to do this right. I think all of you know how important this whole race issue is to me, and it's been amplified in its potential future importance because of the problems that we see involving race and ethnic and religious problems around the world.

So I want to make sure that when we put this document out, it is in the form of a book

which can be useful and have something to say and move the conversation and the efforts beyond where we were in the Presidential initiative on race. So you shouldn't draw any conclusions other than that I want to be personally involved in it and I simply haven't had the time to give it the effort that it deserves.

Q. Is it based on the panel's hearings and so forth?

The President. Oh, yes, to some extent. It's based on the panel's hearings; it's based on very long conversations I had with the people that worked on the draft for me—with Mr. Edley and Terry Edmonds and others. We had some long, long sessions. I went through everything I wanted in the book. I went through some things I wanted to emphasize more than were emphasized in the year that the panel was publicly meeting—we were having the race dialogs.

But I think it's very important, but it's got to be, first of all, mine. It's got to reflect what I believe and where I think we need to go. And secondly, it needs to move the ball forward a little bit.

There's still a great deal of interest in this. Those of you who covered the speech this morning at Georgetown will remember that the young woman from Alabama who introduced me talked about how the initiative on race got her involved in something in her local community. Another one of the Presidential scholars, when she walked by me this morning, said, "I want to know how I can get involved; I'm still interested in this." So I think there's still a great deal of interest in this in the country, and maybe, especially among our younger people. And I just want this book to be very good.

So you shouldn't—yes, there are some differences of opinion among the people who had input in it, but that's not what's caused us not to put it out. What's caused us not to put it out is that I have not had the time to give to it, to be very careful and relaxed and thoughtful about how I say what it is I want to say to the country about this.

Larry [Larry McQuillan, Reuters].

Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, this morning and again just now, you made references to a summer

of progress, and you were calling for bipartisanship to try to accomplish things in the next few months. I'm just wondering, with the 2000 campaign obviously heating up and growing in intensity, do you feel there's more of an urgency to act right away, within the coming months?

The President. Well, for one thing, I think it would be to everyone's advantage to continue to make progress. As I always tell the Republicans and Democrats, no matter how much we do, there will still be plenty of things on which there is honest disagreement, over which the next election can be fought. That is it just in the nature of things. That's healthy; that's good; that's a two-party system in America.

But we are all hired by the American people to work here day-in and day-out, week-in and week-out, and we make a grave mistake—and it's almost never good politics to do the wrong thing—that is, to take a pass on making progress when you can do it.

This is a very unusual moment where we have sustained prosperity, the longest peacetime expansion in our history. We've gone from having the biggest deficits in history to having the biggest surpluses in history. And yet, we have these looming demographic challenges of Social Security and Medicare. And we have these big issues that are right before us now, the ones I mentioned on which there is basically broad agreement.

So I think that it would be good for America and, therefore, good for everyone involved if we go ahead and do this. I think, obviously, the closer you get to the election, perhaps the more difficult it will be. But I expect—I'll make you a prediction here—I expect that we'll get some good things done in the year 2000, before the Congress recesses finally for the election then. I expect to keep working right up to the very end, and I think that we will continue to make progress.

But the most important thing is the attitude of the main players in Congress insofar as Congress has to play a role in this.

Yes, go ahead.

Response to Cox Committee Report on Chinese Nuclear Espionage

Q. Mr. President, in the wake of California Congressman Christopher Cox's study of spying in the U.S. and, specifically, Chinese attempts to spy, you asked your Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to look into this, and it came back with a central recommendation that you separate the Nation's nuclear labs from the Energy Department.

Your Energy Secretary seems to be resisting that. Ask me, sir—tell me, sir, how you feel about it—[*laughter*—and let me ask you once again: Do you still maintain that you were not told anything about these Chinese efforts to spy at the Nation's nuclear labs during your administration, sir?

The President. Let's go back to the first question—there are two separate questions. I read Senator Rudman's report; I thought it was quite interesting and had a lot of very helpful analyses of how this problem developed. And there were actually two separate organizational recommendations that he made in the alternative: either that the labs could be put under an independent board, or that the labs should be taken out of the present hierarchy of organization because of the culture—the committee—the Rudman group talked a lot about the culture of the labs and its resistance to oversight. He said another alternative might be to take it out from under the present organizational structure and make it directly answerable—the labs—directly answerable to the Secretary's Office. And he posed those things in the alternative.

I have asked our people to look at it. I have talked to Secretary Richardson about it. I think everyone recognizes that he has worked very hard to deal with the underlying security issues, which are the most important things. And I think we all just ought to try to get together and work out what the best organizational structure is, and I expect that we will be—I expect to have a chance to talk to him about that and to work on it.

But I think the Rudman report was a service to the country, and I think that Bill Richardson is doing a good job on trying to

implement the security measures that are necessary. He's being very, very aggressive.

Now, on the second question, I went back—I've been interested in this question, and I went back and looked at exactly what I said. Let me go back to what the facts are. First of all, there's been a 20-year problem with lax security at the labs. And what I said was that I didn't suspect that any actual breaches of security had occurred during my tenure. Since then, we have learned of the offloading of the computer by Mr. Lee, from the secured computers into his personal computers. That's something we know now that I didn't know then.

But I think my choice of wording was poor. What I should have said was I did not know of any specific instance of espionage, because I think that we've been suspicious all along. And I have to acknowledge, I think, I used a poor word there. I think suspicion is—we have been suspicious all along, generally. We did not have any specific instance, as we now do, of the offloading of the computer.

But I also want to emphasize that I took no particular comfort in that, because what we have here is—what I learned in 1997 was that there was a general problem of very long standing with the security at the labs, and I issued the Executive order in early '98 to clean it up. And Secretary Richardson has been working on it since then. And I think we've made a lot of progress since then.

Yes.

Medicare

Q. Sir, I'd like to ask you about Medicare and your plans that you're going to be announcing next week. This is a program that tens of millions of Americans depend on and yet in 15 years it will be, effectively, bankrupt. And you're about to propose what could be a very costly additional benefit in the prescription benefit. Why are you going to do that, sir? Isn't that going to make the problem worse, not better?

The President. No. For one thing—let me remind you that we have taken a lot of very tough positions to reform Medicare since 1993. When I took office, Medicare was supposed to go broke this year. And now it's out to—what is it—2015 or something. So we have taken a lot of important positions

already. And as a matter of fact, as I'm sure you're all aware, a lot of the health care providers—particularly rural hospitals, nursing homes, home health providers, a disproportionate share of hospitals—for the folks listening to us, that's basically inner-city hospitals and teaching hospitals that have a whole lot of poor folks they take care of who aren't reimbursed—a lot of those people believe that our savings are too great. But we've taken some very tough actions to try to lengthen the life of the Medicare Trust Fund.

When I make my proposals on Tuesday, there will be more to lengthen the life further, to make sure that we get through the first quarter century and maybe more of the new century with Medicare alive and well.

But if you look at the long run, I think it's important that we propose a prescription drug benefit because life expectancy is going up. Drugs are being constantly developed which help to improve the quality as well as the length of life, and if they are properly taken, they can actually reduce long-term hospitalization and other medical costs.

Now, it is absolutely true that if we design this wrong, it could wind up being a lot more expensive than rosy scenario suggests. But if you look at my record here over the last 6½ years, I've tried to be quite conservative in my budget projections and quite responsible in handling the budget of the country. And you will see that, I think, reflected in the way I make this proposal—including the prescription drugs.

But I don't really think there's any alternative here. You've got 15 million Americans—seniors—out there without any kind of coverage for their medicine. You've got millions and millions of others with inadequate or highly expensive coverage. And I just—I really believe that this is the most significant health care need that senior citizens have today. And I believe that over the long run, the proper availability, properly priced, of prescription medicine will actually not only lengthen lives and improve the quality of life of our seniors and improve their security—their state of mind—but it will also, long, long-term, save medical costs because it will keep people out of hospitals and out of more expensive treatments.

Ellen [Ellen Ratner, Talk Radio News Service].

Campaign Finance Reform

Q. What is your strategy now, Mr. President, for a comprehensive campaign finance reform, to really make it pass?

The President. Well, I think the best strategy is to get a clear majority of the House of Representatives to demand that it come up, and then try to put enough pressure on to get the Senate leaders to let it come up.

Basically, the Republican leadership in the Senate has said that they're just not going to permit it to come up, because they don't want their people who would vote against it to have a recorded vote on it, and they don't want to run the risk that they've got enough for their folks that would vote with all of ours—see, all of our people are for it. We've got 100 percent of the Democrats in the Senate for it.

And so, what I think we have to do is to keep it on the front burner enough so that the discomfort level rises high enough that an actual vote is allowed. All I've really asked for here is a vote. If we'd just get a vote on the bill, I will be very well satisfied and I think it will come out just fine.

Yes, Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Timing of Candidacy Announcements and Effects of President's Conduct

Q. Can I ask a political question? When Vice President Gore announced officially for President, he chose a date when you were going to be out of the country. And according to Mrs. Clinton's supporters, if she announces her exploratory committee in the next couple of weeks, it would be at a time when you've got a commitment to go out to South Dakota.

Do you think your personal behavior has made you something of a liability to those who are running? And did you take it personally when Vice President Gore made his announcement and seemed to set himself so clearly separate from you when it came to issues of family?

The President. Well, first of all, I thought, as I have said repeatedly, I thought the Vice President had a great announcement. And

what he really said in his announcement—I actually heard it, so I don't have to have it characterized for me—what he said in his announcement was that he had had more experience than anybody running—which is true; that he would put forward more specific ideas about what he would do if he were elected President than anyone has to date, by far—which is true; and that the choice before the American people was whether we would build on the progress that we've made for the last 6 years or turn around and go backwards—which is what I think the real choice will be before the American people. So I approved of that.

And as far as his doing it when I was out of the country, I thought that was a good thing. Very often, you'd be amazed how many times over the last 6½ years we have planned for certain announcements to be made by the Vice President when I was out of the country, because that way it gets—I mean, far be it for us to try to maneuver the press—[laughter]—but he gets better coverage and I get better coverage—I'm out of the country, so he gets better coverage. So I thought that was a good thing.

And I think on the general point, what I have noticed over now more than 30 years, since I first began to volunteer as a young man in politics, all politics, all elections are about the future; and all candidates are judged on their own merits. And I believe that is the case here.

But I think that the American people know that the country's in good shape and that not only our economic policies, our crime policies, and our welfare policies, but our family policies are good for their efforts to raise their children. And the best thing that I can do, it seems to me, is to do the right thing by my country, to just keep working at being a good President, and they'll do fine.

Q. Not be with Mrs. Clinton when she campaigns?

The President. Well, first of all, she hasn't made a decision to announce to run for the Senate. This is not what's going on here. And as a practical matter, logistically and legally—as a practical matter, she has to have an exploratory committee to continue to talk to people in New York about this. That's all this is. She has not made a final decision to run

yet. So I think that's a whole different issue. And I think that you should look at it in that context.

Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Serbs and Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, considering what's going on in Kosovo now, and now that you've had a chance to meet with the refugees in Macedonia on Tuesday and you've heard the depth of the hatred that they feel for the Serbs and you've heard of the brutality to which they were subjected, is it not asking the impossible for the Serbs and the ethnic Albanians to live in peace in Kosovo?

The President. Well, I don't think they could do it without a lot of help in the short run. And I think—I was asked this question earlier in a slightly different question—I think that the first and most important thing is for us to get the whole KFOR force in there, all 50,000, as quickly as possible, properly deployed to maximize security. Then I think we've got to get people busy doing positive things—rebuilding their homes, reestablishing their property records, reestablishing their schools. We've got to give them something to think about on a daily basis that is positive. Then I strongly believe we need to give them the help they need to try to work through this emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, morally. I think a lot of these children are going to need mental health services, and I hope we can get them. I think that we need to bring people in who have been through similar things.

I had a long talk with Elie Wiesel about this after he came back. He went over and toured the camps for me and talked to the people. I think that there are people who've been through the Holocaust who can help a lot. I think there are people who have been through South Africa and the peace and reconciliation commission and 300 years of what those people went through there—who can help a lot.

I think we need to be quite imaginative about—once we get the building blocks of security and the building blocks of reconstruction in place and the building blocks of civil society in place, then I think we need to be quite imaginative about the human, spiritual dimension of this. And I will do my

best to be supportive. I've talked to Reverend Jackson about this—about the importance of bringing in religious leaders from all the—not only from the Muslim and the Orthodox faiths to come and work together and work people through this, but perhaps others as well. So there are lots of things that we need to do.

Can it be done? I believe it can be done. It's going to take a lot of courage, and it's going to take some time.

Go ahead, Sarah [Sarah McClendon, McClendon News Service].

American Families

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]*—it seems to me that one of our big issues is parenting—that causes divorces—[inaudible]—having children and breaking up the families. Isn't there any way that we can design a national program to educate people—[inaudible].*

The President. Well, you know, it's interesting. On the—to go to your point—when Hillary and I decided that we ought to have this grassroots campaign to try to protect children against violence, and we began to talk to Pam Eakes, who started the Mothers Against Violence movement in Washington State, and others, one of the things that we learned, obviously, is that a lot of young people wind up being—especially really troubled young people—can often be almost strangers in their own homes. And we assume that people ought to just know how to do the most important jobs in life, and they're very often reluctant to ask for help.

But I think one of the things that we have to try to do is to develop the kind of supports parents need to do a better job. And it's a much harder job now than it used to be—especially since the average parent is away from his or her children for 22 hours a week more than was the case 30 years ago.

So I do think that we need to do some more. Most parents, however, want to do a good job, really, really want to do a good job. And I think when you start with that, one of the things that I hope very much will come out of this whole movement against teen violence is more efforts in that regard. Of course, that's one of the reasons that Hillary wrote her book a few years ago—she knows

more about that than I do—and, of course, one of the reasons the Vice President and Mrs. Gore had those family conferences every year, starting before he joined the ticket with me back in '92.

The short answer to your question is, yes, we should do more to help parents do a good job.

Go ahead, Susan [Susan Page, USA Today], and then John [John King, Cable News Network].

Medicare

Q. Mr. President, a lot of Medicare beneficiaries are enthusiastic about the idea of a new prescription drug benefit, but perhaps less enthusiastic about paying higher premiums to pay for it. Should Medicare beneficiaries, themselves, be prepared to endure some pain to get some gain? Should they be prepared to pay higher premiums? And especially, should higher income Medicare beneficiaries pay means-tested premiums that are higher?

The President. Well, let me just—if I give you all the details of my program Tuesday, you won't cover me Tuesday, and then I'll be bereft. [*Laughter*]

What we should do is, first of all, make sure that the integrity of the basic system is strengthened, because there are a lot of seniors who depend upon it. And from my point of view, that means making sure that it's good for at least another quarter century. So that's the first thing we need to do. And to do that, we're going to have to bring in more pressures from competition and other things to modernize it.

Then we should offer a drug benefit, but we should do it—to go back to the former question I was asked, your question—we should do it in a way that we're quite clear that it won't and can't break the bank, that we'll be able to monitor its cost and see how it's going.

And as to the other—as you know, I've been publicly open to that option since 1992. But I think that I want to ask you to wait until Tuesday for the details of the program.

Go ahead, John.

Federal Budget Surplus Allocation

Q. Sir, we're told that next week, the administration will announce that the Federal budget surplus is even larger than you had previously projected. Given that, and given your words today about bipartisanship, do you think now it might be possible to tackle Medicare and Social Security reform and perhaps reach out to Republicans and open the door to a larger tax cut than you have discussed previously?

The President. First, I'm not against tax cuts. I'm not against giving the American people some of this money back from our present prosperity right now. The question is, what kind of tax cut? Who benefits from it? How should it be designed? And how should it be handled to guarantee that we're going to take care of first things first—strengthen Social Security and Medicare, paying down the debt, continuing to secure the health of the American economy?

Keep in mind, what produced the surplus was the strength of the American economy, the fact that we had the will to do the very tough things in 1993, and that we followed it up with a Balanced Budget Act in 1997.

So my plan has tax cuts. The USA accounts are worth literally hundreds and hundreds of dollars to most families every year. They could be worth a quarter of a million dollars to a family over their lifetime. It's most progressive inducement to save in the history of the country. We have tax cuts fully paid for already for long-term care, for child care, for school construction, for investing in the inner city. So I'm not against tax cuts.

We have had tax cuts in the past, big tax cuts, for tuition tax credits for college; the HOPE scholarship tax cuts; tax cuts for workers and families with modest incomes; the child care tax credit, \$500 per child. We've had lots of tax cuts. I am not opposed to that.

What I want to do is to make sure that before we go off and start cutting taxes by some arbitrary large amount, we take care of first things first. We need to know that we're going to modernize and strengthen Social Security for the 21st century, that we're going to modernize and strengthen Medicare for the 21st century, and that we're going to do it in a way that will enable us to continue to pay the debt down.

There will still be money for a tax cut, and a sizable one. Will I work with the Congress on that? Of course, I will. If I want to pass it, I have to work with them; they're in the majority. Of course, I will. But first things first. We've got to get our priorities in order here. The American people plainly expect us, first of all, to keep the economy going. And the best way to do that is to send a signal to the markets that we've resolved Social Security; we've resolved Medicare; and we're paying the debt down. That is the most important thing we could do to guarantee long-term, economic growth.

Secondly—the only other point I want to make is, I do not believe that it is responsible to have a tax cut if the impact of the tax cut—plus the defense increases that we have had to adopt, plus the highway expenditures that the Congress wants to adopt—is to cut education or cut health care or cut our investments in the environment. There is enough money to do all these things and to do it really well, with great discipline. But we have to have our priorities in order.

Go ahead.

President's Political Opposition

Q. Mr. President, 2½ years ago, in your Inaugural, you said you wanted to help the Nation repair the breach. And this morning, again, you called for greater cooperation in Washington. But it seems apparent that, for many people, you, personally, remain a polarizing and divisive figure in national politics. I was wondering if you've ever reflected on why, as Mrs. Clinton, I think, has sometimes noted, throughout your career, you've always seemed to generate such antagonism from your opponents. And do you assign any responsibility to yourself for what this morning you described as the rancorous mood in Washington today?

The President. Since I have been here, I have tried to work as well as I could in an open fashion with Members of both parties. I actually have developed quite good personal relationships with some Republican Members of Congress. But as you know, from the beginning, from 1991, and especially after I was elected, particularly the right wing—I've been accused of murder and all kinds of things. And it seems almost that

the better the country did, the madder some of them got.

Now, what I think is, we have a new Speaker and I think he wants to work with me to get things done. And I've had a very cordial relationship with him. I had a nice talk with Senator Lott just last week. And all I can tell you is, I don't think much about yesterday. I keep telling everybody that works for me, we have no right to harbor anger, to keep—the people in positions of public responsibilities are not permitted to have personal feelings that interfere with their obligations to the public. And I would start tomorrow with any Member of Congress who wanted to work with me on anything, to do something that I thought was good. And that's all I can tell you. There's not a single Member of Congress that I wouldn't be willing to work with to do something that I felt was good for America.

And I think that's what the American people want us to do. And all I can tell you is—but it is true, I think generally in our country's history, that people who are progressive, people who try to change things, people who keep pushing the envelope, have generally elicited very strong, sometimes personally hostile, negative reaction. You read some of the things people said about President Roosevelt—in retrospect, because of the magnificent job he did, and because of the historic consequences of the time in which he served and what he did for America, we tend to think that everybody was for him. That's not true.

So people say these things. I think you just have to dismiss them and go on. And all I can tell you is that we in the White House, we try—and I hammer this home all the time—we don't have to like everything people say about us, but it can't affect, in any way, shape, or form, what we're prepared to do in working with people. That's the way I feel. People in positions of responsibility owe the public—owe the public—their best efforts every day. And they have no right to let their personal feelings get in the way. I try not to do it, and I would hope others would do the same.

Yes, go ahead.

President's Approval Ratings After Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, normally when the United States wins a war, that victory is accompanied by a surge of approval for the Commander in Chief. The war in Kosovo has not produced that sort of bounce for you. As a student of the polls, what do you think they're trying to tell you here?

The President. First of all, I don't know that we know that yet. I just don't know that we know that. And the important thing for you to know is that I did what I thought was right for the United States and for the children of the United States and for the future of the world. And I'm not responsible for anything but that, including the reaction of some after it was over, and we turned out to be right about what would and wouldn't work. It's totally irrelevant.

Abraham Lincoln once said, in a much graver time, that if the end brought him out all right, it wouldn't matter what everybody said against him. And if it didn't, 10,000 angels swearing he was right wouldn't make any difference.

So I have tried to do what I think is right for my country here. I believe that the young people of America are likely to live in a world where the biggest threats are not from other countries but from horrible racial, ethnic, and religious fighting, making people very vulnerable to exploitation from organized criminals, drug runners, terrorists, who themselves are more and more likely to have weapons of mass destruction no matter how hard we work against it.

So I think anything I can do to reduce terrorism, to reduce the ability of terrorists to have weapons of mass destruction, or to stand against racial and ethnic genocide and cleansing is a good thing for our future.

You know, that's all I can tell you. I did what I thought was right. I still believe it was right. And I'll keep working to make it work out. And the public and the Members of the other party and others, people can react however they like. I just have to do what I think is right, and that's what I'll do.

Yes, go ahead.

Congressional Democrats in 2000 Elections

Q. Sir, in advancing your agenda you talked about the need for bipartisanship, but don't you have a problem with congressional Democrats? They say, "Bill Clinton doesn't have to face another election; we do." And they want to run against a do-nothing Congress. As an experienced political pro, don't you have some sympathy for them?

The President. I do, except—I have a lot of sympathy for them. But, first of all, not all Democrats believe that. You see a number in the House, and I think probably a majority in the Senate, do not agree with that. But I think you—you have to, first of all, say, what is our obligation here to the American people? Our obligation is to work for the welfare of the country.

Secondly, I think that nowhere near half the responsibility so far rests on them for the current atmosphere. I mean, they tried—we tried on the guns. We tried on a lot of other things—on campaign finance reform. We're trying on many other issues. I think that—I wouldn't overestimate the extent of that.

But secondly, just as a—you know, if you look at 1996, where we got a lot done for America that year—we didn't just beat the contract on America, we actually did a lot of good things for America. The Democrats made gains in the Congress in 1998, against all the odds, against all the weight of history. We got—we passed a big education budget at the end of 1998—100,000 new teachers—and had a program to run on, and the Democrats were rewarded—against all the odds.

So my view is that if you believe that Government has a role to play in our national life and you accept the fact that there will be honest and legitimate differences between the two parties on outstanding issues, no matter how much we get done, you're better off doing what you can, that you believe in, so you can go tell the people you did that. And then say, but look what still needs to be done; look what still needs to be done.

Elections are always about tomorrow. So I think that—I can only tell you that I think both in terms of what is right for the American people and what is the best politics, we should keep trying to move forward.

Yes.

Justice Department Tobacco Litigation

Q. I want to talk to you a little bit about tobacco litigation. You had said in your State of the Union Address that the Justice Department was going to bring a Federal case against the tobacco companies. But what we're hearing is that the Justice Department had serious reservations about that case. Are they close to being resolved, those reservations, and when do you expect the case to be brought?

The President. Well, I hope so. Let me say just this—I would not have announced it in the State of the Union Address if I hadn't had a clear signal from the Justice Department that they thought there was a legal basis to proceed. We knew if we needed statutory authority to sue under Medicare—a further act of Congress to sue under Medicare, on exactly the same grounds all the States have already sued to recover under Medicaid, that in this Congress, given the power of the big tobacco in this Congress, it would be hard to get.

So we worked for a year or more with the Justice Department on this, arguing back and forth about whether it could be done. We—I and my administration—we were prepared to do this way over a year before I announced what I did in 1998. Maybe as many as 2 years. I just don't remember exactly what the time frame was, but it was quite a long while that we wanted to do this.

So I did not make the announcement in the State of the Union Address until I believed, at least, that the Justice Department felt that while it would be complicated, big, and difficult, that we did, in fact, have a cause of action and we could bring it. So that's all I can tell you. I don't know any more.

Yes.

Public Support for President's Agenda

Q. Mr. President, a question about polling statistics on your domestic issues. Recently, or quite frankly, your numbers have been tracked on certain issues showing that core groups, people who have supported you in the past, have now fallen off. Do you fear, sir, that perhaps you are beginning a disconnect with the American people? And how

can you possibly lead in Congress on the legislative agenda that you've outlined if you don't have the backing of your core groups?

The President. Well, for one thing, the only polls I've seen show overwhelming public support for the Patients' Bill of Rights, for closing the gun show loophole, for the other commonsense gun initiatives—overwhelming support. There is public—strong public support for campaign finance reform. There's overwhelming public support for the gun legislation and some of these issues, like the Patients' Bill of Rights, for example, the support is almost uniform among Republicans, Democrats, and independents.

So I don't know what issues we're pushing, as it happens, that the public agrees with the Republicans and disagrees with us on. I recognize that the public was ambivalent about Kosovo, but they were ambivalent about Bosnia and Haiti and a lot of the other things that I've done in foreign policy—helping Mexico when they were in trouble. But I think the President hires on to make the tough decisions and controversial decisions, too.

You know, the Democrats stayed—when we were in much worse shape in '93 and '94, the Democrats stayed because they believed we were right. We knew that when we cut the deficit \$500 billion and we were all by ourselves—we didn't have any Republican votes—it wasn't going to be popular and you could characterize it, but it was the right thing for America. And look at where our economy is today.

So I think, no matter what the polls say, you just have to get up every day and do what you think is right. And that's what we're doing, and I think we'll be borne out.

Yes, go ahead.

Public's Concern About Moral Decline

Q. I've got a follow to that. The polls are also showing that although people do acknowledge that they're doing better in the economy and that they're doing well personally, they show a deep concern for the Nation's moral fabric, and actually that concern seems to be growing. What responsibility do you, personally, take for that, and what can you in the White House do to address these

moral problems that seem to be cropping up more and more in the polls?

The President. Well, I think people are worried about—I think the most important thing on that is what happened, the shattering effect that Littleton had. In terms of what happened to me in the impeachment issue, I did what I could by telling the American people what I was going to do, that I was going to go back to work being the best President I could be, and I was going to go back to work to try to repair my family life. I have worked very hard for a year to do that, and the public, at the time, had a strong response to that. That's all I can do, and that's what I have done. I've done that very faithfully.

So I don't think that's what's going on. I think people are worried when they see the fabric of life still under great strain in spite of the fact that we have quite a large amount of prosperity. And I think what we all have to do is to ask ourselves: What can we do to reinforce the ability of families to raise their children, to teach them right from wrong, to increase the chances that they'll be able to live strong, whole lives? And I believe, therefore, that there is, in that sense, a moral component to the debate we're having over guns.

I mean, basically, we know—let me just give you one example. We know from the experience of the Brady bill that if we do background checks, thousands of people—at gun shows—thousands of people who shouldn't buy guns won't get them. Now, we know that. I think that's a positive moral value.

The people on the other side essentially say, "Yeah, but we don't want to be inconvenienced." And when people see inconvenienced elevated over the life of a child in this context, I think that causes them problems.

We know that in the case of the Patients' Bill of Rights that people think it's a moral issue if they need to see a specialist or they need—if they get hurt in an accident and they can't go to the nearest emergency room. They know that. And when they see, in effect, someone else's convenience elevated over that, I think that's a problem for them.

So I think that there are lots—this is a complicated thing. But my own view of that is, what we have to do is not pretend that the Government can solve all the moral questions, not evade what people have to do personally in their own lives with their own families, but neither can we take the dodge that the Government has no responsibility.

That's why I tried so hard after that Littleton incident. That's why I'm so disappointed in what Congress did in the House on this gun issue. Because I tried so hard after that Littleton incident not to play politics, not to point the finger at anybody, not to say, "Oh well, it's this, that, or the other thing." You know, I went to Hollywood, I challenged the entertainment community, even though they had done far more to try to move the ball forward than anybody in the gun community until the gun manufacturers started helping, and they've done a good job, too, a lot of them.

I still believe that people think that there is too much "everybody for himself," and if people can get away with what they do because of their position, they'll do it. And I think what I tried to do was to acknowledge it to whatever extent I had done that it was dead wrong, and I was going to spend the rest of my life trying to rectify that, which is all anybody can do. And I think most people accept that. They'd rather have somebody do that than go around trying to give a lot of speeches about how good they are, and then open the door for the gun lobby to run the Congress.

So you'll just have to make up your own mind about that. But I think that—what I think is important is that we stop trying to figure out how to make points against one another by saying, "I'm better than you are." You know, I was raised in a family that would have given me a whipping if I had done that as a boy. I was raised to believe that we were suppose to try to be humble in our personal search, but aggressive in trying to help our neighbors. That's the religious tradition I was raised in.

Now, I get the feeling that people say, "Well, what we should do is be arrogant about how good we are and the heck with our neighbors." I don't agree with that. I think we'd be better off with the former tra-

dition, and I think it has deeper roots in American life and is more consistent with what we should be doing.

George [George Condon, Copley News Service].

Lessons From Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, wartime Presidents, even the great ones—Lincoln, Wilson, or Roosevelt—all discovered that wars never went exactly the way they planned it. In Kosovo, what surprised you or went a way that you didn't expect, and what lessons did you learn in Kosovo?

The President. The bombing went on—I had two models in my mind on what would happen with the bombing campaign. I thought it would either be over within a couple of days, because Mr. Milosevic would see we were united; or if he decided to sustain the damage to his country, that it would take quite a long while for the damage to actually reach the point where it was unsustainable. It took only a little longer than I thought it would once we got into the second model.

But I was surprised about some of the things. I was surprised that it took—I was surprised, on the one hand, that we lost no pilots. I was surprised by that. I was surprised that we'd lost only two planes and no pilots.

I know that from your point of view, there were a lot of civilian casualties, but that's because you got to cover them as opposed to covering the civilian casualties of the Gulf war. If you talked to any military person that was involved in both conflicts, they will tell you that there were far, far more civilian casualties in Iraq. I mean, many more by several times as many.

I was a little surprised that we had no more problems than we did in maintaining our Allied unity, given the enormous pressures that were on some of our Allies. And I think that gives you some indication about the depth of conviction people had that this was right.

Let me just say this—I think one way to understand this—I almost never see this, but let me just—one way to understand this about why we all did what we did even when a lot of folks thought we were crazy, or at least thought we couldn't prevail, is I don't think I can even begin—I am very surprised—I was surprised and heartbroken that

the Chinese Embassy was hit because of the mapping accidents. That did surprise me. I had no earthly idea that our system would permit that kind of mistake. That was the biggest surprise of all.

But let me just say one other thing. I think that when you look at this conflict and you seek to understand, well, why did President Clinton do this, why did Tony Blair do this, why did Jacques Chirac go along, why did the Germans get in there with both feet so early given their history and all this—I think you have to see this through the lens of Bosnia. And keep in mind in Bosnia, we had the U.N. in there first in a peacekeeping mission. Then we tried for 4 years, 50 different diplomatic solutions, all those different maps, all that different argument. And the end of it all, from 1991 to 1995, we still had Srebrenica.

We still had—and when it was all said and done, we had a quarter of a million people dead and 2½ million refugees. And I think what you have to understand is that we saw this through the lens of Bosnia. And we said we are not going to wait a day, not a day if we can stop it.

Once we knew there was a military plan, they had all those soldiers deployed, they had all those tanks deployed, we knew what was coming, and we decided to move.

So yes, there were surprises along the way. I'm terribly sorry about the Embassy. We made our report—I've gotten a report and the Chinese got—I made sure the Chinese got essentially the same report I did. We didn't put any varnish on it. And I'm sorry about it. But our pilots on the whole did a superb job, and we did the right thing. And I hope that the American people, as time goes on, will feel more and more strongly that we did.

Yes.

Aid to Farmers

Q. There's one issue that you didn't raise in your list of domestic priorities, and that's agriculture. As you know, the agricultural economy is not doing well. Some say it's in a death spiral. Senate Democrats have tried to add a \$6 billion aid package to agricultural appropriations. Now the Senate Republicans have written you a letter asking you to ac-

knowledge the crisis and set a dollar amount for what you think might be needed to keep those farmers on the land this year.

The President. Well, we're working on that. Last year, at the end, we got about that much money—about \$6 billion in emergency appropriations last year for the farmers. And it is quite bad this year, and we are going to have to give them more support. And I intend to do it.

I just want to point out—when this Congress passed the freedom to farm act, I warned them that there was no safety net in there and that it would only work as long as farm prices stay at an acceptable level. And I think what we have to face now is whether or not this is another emergency.

From the point of view of the farmers, it's a terrible emergency; it's a crisis. We have to deal with it. But from the point of view of the Congress, what they have to face is, is this a second year of an emergency, or do they have a fundamentally flawed bill? And if the answer is the latter, can we handle this with emergency legislation or do we need to change the law?

But if you're asking me, am I going to recommend more help for America's farmers? The answer is, yes. There is no other alternative. This was—there were a lot of good things in the freedom to farm bill. It gave more freedom to farmers; it gave more opportunity for conservation reserve; it had more for rural development. But it had no safety net, and it was obvious to anybody that ever fooled with agriculture for several years that sooner or later, this was going to happen—and it happened. And it was as predictable as the Sun coming up in the morning. And I think it would be terrible to let thousands of more farmers go under, under these circumstances.

Yes, go ahead.

Q. Which one?

The President. You.

First Lady's Method of Travel

Q. Thank you. As the First Lady considers a possible Senate bid in New York, she's made an unusual number of campaign-style appearances in the Empire State using Government jets at taxpayer expense. I wanted

to ask you if you thought that was an appropriate expenditure of taxpayer money and if you think the privilege should continue once—or if—she finally does announce her candidacy.

The President. Well, part of how she travels is determined by the Secret Service. She is willing to do—first of all, in the exploratory phase and if she should become a candidate, she will fully comply with all the Federal rules and regulations that govern her. But part of how she travels is determined by what the Secret Service says. And you'd be amazed how many times in the last few years we've wanted to take the train to New York, for example, and haven't been able to do it.

So these are legitimate questions that we take quite seriously, she takes seriously, and we're trying to work through them as best as possible.

Yes sir, in the back.

War in the Balkans and President's Legacy

Q. Thank you, sir. How do you want to be remembered abroad, as a leader who wanted to shape America's face among other nations? How do you want to be remembered in the Balkans, in Eastern Europe, where people have strong feelings about America, different kinds of feelings? And pardon me for asking that, do you expect if someone, somewhere, wants to put a price tag on your head, just as the State Department offered \$5 million to get Mr. Milosevic, given the controversy that NATO leaders might also have committed war crimes by bombing vital infrastructure in the region? Thank you.

The President. Well, first of all, we have not put a price on Mr. Milosevic's head for someone to kill him. We have offered a reward for people who can arrest and help bring to justice war criminals, because of the absence of honoring the international extradition rules in Serbia. So let's get that clear. No one is interested in that. The United States policy is opposed to assassination, has been since Gerald Ford was President, officially, and I have rigorously maintained it. So we don't try to do that to heads of state. So that's the first thing.

Secondly, NATO did not commit war crimes. NATO stopped war crimes. NATO stopped deliberate, systematic efforts at ethnic cleansing and genocide. And we did it in a way to minimize civilian casualties. Our pilots were up there—I'm telling you, there were days when they were consistently risking their lives because the Serbs were firing at them with shoulder-fired missiles in the midst of highly populated villages, and the pilots did not fire back and take them out because they knew if they missed, they would kill civilians.

Yes, there were civilians killed. But I will say again, if you compare the civilian losses here with the losses in Desert Storm, it's not even close. They did a magnificent job. They were brave. We tried to minimize casualties. Every target we hit was relevant to the, essentially, the state machine of terrorism that Mr. Milosevic was running.

And finally, I'm not concerned right now about how I'm being remembered; I'll be remembered when I'm gone. Right now, I'm not gone, and I've got lots to do.

Yes, go ahead.

U.S. Presence in Okinawa

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You're just back from the G-8 summit meeting in Cologne, Germany, and next year you're going to Okinawa, Japan, for another summit meeting. Okinawa is the home of a huge U.S. military presence in Japan and the Far East. And I'm wondering if you will try hard and resolve all the major issues pending between the U.S. and Japanese Governments about the U.S. bases in Okinawa, most importantly, the relocation of the Futenma Air Base, before you go there next year. Thank you.

The President. Absolutely. I don't want to go over there and have all these things hanging out. I hope they'll all be resolved. Let me say, I think it's a very exciting thing, and I congratulate Prime Minister Obuchi on wanting to host this conference in Okinawa. It's very unusual, in a way, for a leader to do that, to take the conference so far away from the capital city. And I think it's very farsighted. I hope it will be good for the people and the economy of Okinawa, and I hope to goodness we'll have all the outstanding issues resolved by the time we get there.